

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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WOODCOCK HUNTING CLOSURE UNLIKELY; MAINE PESTICIDE READINGS ARE LOW

Analysis of pesticide residues from woodcock collected in Maine has revealed no reason so far for closing the woodcock hunting season in New England, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Leslie L. Glasgow announced today.

Residues in the Maine birds were considerably below those found in woodcock in New Brunswick which caused Canadian authorities to close the season in that Province.

Maine woodcock, taken in a cooperative sampling with the State's Department of Inland Fisheries and Game, had levels of DDT and its metabolites ranging from 2.44 to 26.95 parts per million (ppm) in fats extracted from breast muscle.

The average was 5.84 ppm (New Brunswick birds averaged 56 ppm). Only 2 of 15 Maine birds had residues above 7 ppm. Early this month, Massachusetts' Division of Fisheries and Game tested eight woodcock for pesticide levels in breast muscle. These birds, taken from three locations in the State, averaged 1.57 ppm, with a range from .33 to 3.54 ppm.

Dr. Glasgow, who heads Interior's programs for fish, wildlife and parks, said woodcock is an infrequent item in the human diet, even among hunters.

Woodcock are increasingly popular game birds in eastern parts of North America. They are migratory birds hunted in all States east of the Mississippi River as well as in Minnesota, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. State seasons last about 60 days; openings are staggered from mid-September to mid-December.

The woodcock population appears to be holding its own--despite pesticides and increased hunting pressures. About 1,000,000 are estimated to be taken by American hunters annually.